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SUBJECT: ECUADOR ELECTION: THEN THERE WERE SEVENTEEN

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The registration period for all candidates running for office in October 15 elections closed on August 15, attracting an unprecedented seventeen presidential aspirants. Eccentric billionaire candidate Alvaro Noboa announced his reentry, oddly declaring himself "a hero of God who will slay his cowardly adversaries." Meanwhile, PAIS movement candidate Rafael Correa has taken some heat for not entering congressional candidates, pledging instead to immediately convoke a constituent assembly to change the constitution. The proliferation of presidential candidates will make elections more complicated to administer and ensure continued political fragmentation. End Summary.

Seventeen Presidential Candidates Registered

¶2. (U) Seventeen presidential candidates, with a disproportionate number of the major contenders hailing from Guayaquil, have now registered (up from 11 in 2002, and only six in 1998), including eccentric billionaire Alvaro Noboa, who reentered the race at the last minute and told the press that he felt obligated as a centrist to offer a non-traditional candidacy in opposition to Rafael Correa. Going further, Noboa claimed to be a religious hero and with the bible in hand would beat his cowardly adversaries. Current registered candidates, in rough descending order of popularity according to recent polls, include:

¶1. Leon Roldos (24%), RED/Democratic Left Alliance (RED/ID) Movement. VP Ramiro Gonzalez (ID)

¶2. Cynthia Viteri (17%), Social Christian Party (PSC). VP Ernesto Davalos.

¶3. Rafael Correa (10%), PAIS Alliance (PAIS) Movement. VP Lenin Moreno.

¶4. Alvaro Noboa (10%). Institutional Renewal Party of National Action (PRIAN) VP Vincente Taiano.

¶5. Fernando Rosero (3%), Ecuadorian Roldosista Party (PRE). VP Susy Mendoza.

¶6. Gilmar Gutierrez (n/a), Patriotic Society Party (PSP). VP Leonardo Escobar.

¶7. Jaime Damerval (1%), Concentration of People's Forces (CFP) Party. VP Lida Moreno.

¶8. Luis Macas (1%), Pluri-National Pachakutik United Movement (PK). VP Cesar Sacoto.

¶9. Luis Villacis (1%), Democratic People's Movement (MPD).
VP Cesar Buelva.

¶10. Marco Proano Maya (1%), Movement for Democratic
Vindication (MRD). VP Galo Cabanilla.

¶11. Marcelo Aguinaga (n/a), National Conciliation Movement
(MCN). VP Jorge Norero.

¶12. Marcelo Larrea (n/a), Third Republic Bolivarian Allianca
Movement (ALBA). VP Miguel Moran.

¶13. Franklin Munoz (n/a), National Movement to Wake Up
Citizens, (MNDC). VP Luis Burgos.

¶14. Pedro Roura O. (n/a), Pacific Revolution (MRP). VP
Vladimir Roura.

¶15. Carlos Sagnay (n/a), The Eclectic Movement (ME). VP
Luis Tuaran.

¶16. Lenin Torres (n/a), Revolutionary Movement of Popular
Participation (MRPP). VP Maria Pareja.

¶17. Julio Pincay (n/a), Ecuadorian Independent Patriotic
Movement (MIPE). VP Glenda Garcia.

Correa Criticized as Aspiring "Dictator"

¶3. (U) PAIS presidential candidate Rafael Correa did not register congressional candidates under the PAIS movement banner, saying to do so would only contribute to the institutional crisis. PSC leader Leon Febres Cordero (LFC) publicly criticized Correa's decision as undemocratic: "Correa says that he will run for president, but not with a list of congressional representatives. Doesn't that mean he is running for dictator?" Congress President Wilfredo Lucero (ID) chimed in publicly, repeating the same charge on August 14, adding that to expect the new Congress to approve a constituent assembly dissolving itself was ludicrous. Any such assembly implies constitutional changes, requiring the support of a 2/3 majority in Congress. Furthermore, he said, members of any assembly would "not be any more qualified or representative, and perhaps less so" than the newly-elected Congress. While PAIS is not offering congressional candidates, the Socialist party which is supporting Correa,s presidential bid is.

Congressional Lists Run Gamut

¶4. (U) LFC heads the PSC Congressional list in Guayas, the PSC heartland and province with the largest population, and will certainly be re-elected, despite not appearing personally in Congress for years, for health reasons. The PSC hopes to win 12 representatives in Guayas and between 26-28 in the country. PSC presidential candidate Cynthia Viteri's sister, Natalie, is second on the Guayas list. Meanwhile, the Red/Democratic Left Alliance (ID) had great difficulty agreeing on a coordinated division of candidates in Guayas, fueling allegations of divisions within the alliance. The alliance therefore agreed to run separate congressional lists in Guayas, while Wilma Andrade and Andres Paez top the ID/RED list in Pichincha. The PRIAN list in Guayas is headed by Alvaro Noboa's wife, Anabella Azin, with two other women, Silka Sanchez and Gloria Gallardo, filling out the top three spots.

¶5. (U) Four parties on August 15 also registered candidates for the Andean Parliament. The PSC nominated former congressman Marcelo Dotti, while the Democratic Christian Union (UDC) selected former president Sixto Duran Ballen and Elsa de Mena, ex-director of Ecuador's Social Security Administration. PRIAN chose Hector Solorzano, Bucaram's former private attorney. Roldos' ID-RED, meanwhile put up its national president, Guillermo Landazuri, for the

Parliament. Former trade minister and Ecuadorian ambassador to the U.S., Ivonne Baki, was nominated by the PSP.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) Noboa's re-entry into the race will alter the status of forces. Though he left the race a month ago with only 10% support, the relative weakness of the PRE candidate and the TSE's likelihood of ruling out the Gutierrez ticket on technicalities could allow Noboa to rise to challenge Viteri for second place. Regardless, administering this election with five different races, innumerable candidates and now 17 presidential contenders will challenge the TSE, making USG election support all the more critical. Adding a 15-question referendum, as proposed by President Palacio, would make it all but unmanageable.

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